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THE ENGLISH LEAFLET

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ASSOCIATION OF TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

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GEORGE H. BROWNE, PRESIDENT

F. W. C. HERSEY, SEC'Y AND TREAS.

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THE TEACHING OF HISTORY BY MOTION PICTURES

REPORT OF A SPECIAL MEETING*

At Huntington Hall, Boston,

May 7, 1915.

The PRESIDENT. It is a little difficult, of course, to get a meeting together, even on a subject like this, at such short notice this busy time of the school year. "The Birth of a Nation" is undoubtedly the immediate cause of this special meeting; but I hope that it will develop into not so much a protest against a play as a protest against a principle,—discovering if possible, also, some principle by which we can get better plays. From this origin of the meeting, the call is obviously for teachers of history and teachers of English to consider the question not entirely from the point of view of the blacks or the whites, the press or the legislature, the producers or the public interested only in the commercial or the entertainment side of the motion picture, but especially

* Organized immediately after the public protest in Tremont Temple, on the following call, sent to about 1000 members of the N. E. History Teachers' Association, The N. E. Association of Teachers of English, and others:

"There will be a special meeting of the New England Association of Teachers of English at Huntington Hall, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Friday afternoon, May 7th, at 4 o'clock. Topic for discussion: *The Teaching of History By Motion Pictures.*

The discussion of this topic, of vital interest to teachers of History and English at this particular time, as at all times, will it is hoped be general, and perhaps discover some sound principles of censorship. The Council of the New England History Teachers' Association could not be reached in season to make this officially a joint meeting; but a full attendance of History Teachers and of all others interested is especially requested. Please extend this notice.

GEORGE H. BROWNE, (The Browne & Nichols School, Cambridge.)

President, N. E. Association of Teachers of English.

from the point of view of the interests of the pupils under our charge.

This meeting is a continuation of a meeting that the English Association had last December, in which we discussed the motion picture as a possible ally in the teaching of literature. With the exception of the testimony of one teacher, who reported that she got considerable assistance in securing live narrative topics for compositions by some of her young summer students, the testimony of teachers and of pupils and of the moving picture people themselves was strongly against much educational value to the motion picture as at present produced or likely soon to be produced.

We teachers are held responsible now-a-days for a great many things for which conditions over which we have no control are more largely responsible. Many distractions have made the teaching of English and the teaching of history much more difficult than ever before in the history of education, such as the increasing distractions of cheap literature, cheap plays, cheap music, premature club manners, etc. There are three other distractions that touch our work very closely; viz., the current apotheosis of amusement, the automobile, and the moving picture show. And they are not mere passing novelties. You would be surprised, I think, if you were to take a census of your pupils, and find out how much of their natural, spontaneous energy is taken up with things that you don't very closely reach.

These new things, however, for good or ill, are here to stay. What are we going to do with them? How are we going to counteract these distractions? It is an almost hopeless task, without home co-operation, in the five or six scant hours in school; but we may do something by instituting some "counter irritants" and giving the boys other things to think about. At our school we try to do this to some degree with the daily "morning talk," by which in ten or fifteen minutes at the beginning of school, teachers and outsiders, occasionally, on a wide range of topics, and the boys themselves, frequently, on topics that they are interested in, enlarge their intellectual horizon and get good practice in public speaking. This week, in place of one of these regular morning talks, I substituted three questions for written answers. I asked all the boys to give their age, but not their names if it would embarrass the writing out in ten minutes the frankest, honestest expression of their opinion: first, as to their impressions of "The Birth of a Nation," if they had seen it; second, if they had not seen it, their impressions as to whether they thought it was a good play to exhibit or not; and third, if they had not an opinion on either of those questions, to tell what the "movies" did for them. We flatter ourselves that our boys come from as good homes as there are in this country; the co-operation of these homes with our school is as efficient, I think, as any school gets; and, I am sure, few boys in any school are more favored by circumstance and opportunity than these boys are. They wrote some pretty frank replies; and while our fellow-members are collecting here, I want

to take five minutes, perhaps, in reading to you some selections. They are representative reactions that ought, some of them, to give us pause. I think we may all agree with the first three or four of them.

An eleven year old boy says:—"It would be a very good thing to have history taught accurately by moving pictures."

A boy 16 years old—"If the film should be shown merely as romance and not true history, it seems to me it ought to be shown."

A boy 15 years—"I think that the fuss about it is just what its managers want, as everybody wants to see it even at the high prices. They must be getting rich quickly. I don't think we want to contribute any more to that than we can help."

14 Years—"If 'The Birth of a Nation' can be put on the stage without stirring up riots it is all right, provided you know the historical mistakes in it."

17 Years—"From what I have heard from those who have seen it, I should say it was bad—aside from any twisting of history."

14 Years—"I do not go to 'photo plays.' This play, such as it is, is probably better for the people than the average hair-raising 'photo play.' Nevertheless, the vicious parts should be removed. But why not start all over?"

15 Years—"I think 'The Birth of a Nation' is the best motion picture ever made. One gets a better idea of the war and the reconstruction period from it than they would in a history book."

14 Years—"I don't go to a picture show to get education, but on rainy days I go to have some fun. I think that Edison's idea would meet with great success."

Edison's idea here referred to (from a letter of his read to the school last fall) is that boys don't read books nowadays; they hate reading, and they ought to hate it, because books do not provide the best way to get history and other information to them; the quickest and most economical way is by motion pictures. Edison, therefore, has begun an eight year series of educational films that will abolish all text-books below the ninth grade!

In spite of these conditions, our patrons are still inclined to hold us mainly responsible if we don't get our boys to appreciate the "classic" literature prescribed by the colleges (little of which is regularly read even in their homes), and if we don't inspire them with enthusiasm for history and civics. But learning how to study history and to appreciate literature now-a-days requires on the part of the pupil, the exertion of at least four powers which were never harder than they are today to acquire and to command; viz., concentration, imagination, memory, and will. I am quite sure that if I were to read you from the reactions on these boys more evidences as to what the motion picture is doing for the development of their concentration*, their imagination†, their

*Concentration. 19 Years.—"As far as the 'movies' hurting your mind, I think there is nothing in it; in the first place you do not pay enough attention to make it lasting, and so they have no influence on you."

memory‡, and their will§, you would not be surprised at some of the discouraging results that show in their work at this time of the year. On the whole, the best of the replies were encouraging. One cannot help feeling, however, that in an excitement like this, what is said about it in the papers, or what you say about the motion-picture in your classroom, does not go very far against the allurements of the 'show'; and that the boys of the very best homes are under outside influences that, to say the least, are exceedingly trying, not only to their parents but to their teachers, too. I am not pessimistic—I am only looking at a new situation squarely in the face. The gasoline engine, the phonograph, and the motion-picture are, I admit, contributions of the last ten years of incalculable possibilities for education,—but they are just now complicating the educational situation in school as it has never been complicated before. (If occasion arises, I think there may be some profit in reading more of this evidence, but there is no time now.)

Most of the few boys who had seen this photo play approved it; most of the hundred who had not seen it disapproved it; the general testimony was that the moving picture was primarily for entertainment; that the best firms could not or would not produce

‡Imagination. 15 Years.—“Moving pictures, in my opinion are the most interesting form of indoor entertainment now in existence. Some kinds of films do not impress me as interesting, in fact they decidedly bore me. By this I refer to ‘Pathe Weekly,’ ‘Hearst-Selig News Pictorial,’ and ‘Mutual Weekly.’ These three productions are published every week, and I would not pay two cents to see any of them. On the other hand, ‘Charlie Chaplin’ comedys are highly entertaining to me, as are the ‘Exploits of Elaine’ which I see every week at the Orpheum. I am so interested in this continued film, that I go at the time the film is put on and get out when it ends.”

‡Memory. 19 Years.—“I have never yet seen a so-called historical picture that was accurate enough to make me care to remember it.

13 Years.—“When I go to the ‘movies’ I get no material good I simply have an afternoon of amusement which, half an hour afterwards, I have forgotten all about.”

§Will, Perseverance, Effort. 18 Years.—“I go to the ‘movies’ because I want to go somewhere where I do not have to think. At the ‘movies’ I can have relaxation without mental exertion. Also, I enjoy the ‘movies’, or I would not spend my dime. The education from them I receive has been negligible, as they are at present conducted. If they were educational, no doubt I would shun the moving pictures.”

16 Years.—“Whenever I go to a motion-picture show, I go for pure enjoyment and recreation. I do not go in order to learn something. Whenever something supposedly instructive, such as the growing of sugar-cane, which I saw a short while ago in Boston, I always want to get up and go out because I came to get away from the atmosphere of instruction and learning, to get a little change of thought.”

good educational films; and, therefore, you ought to go only for entertainment. If this play were frankly treated as a romance, they could not see any objection to it. I rather feel that that is partly my attitude, too. If "The Birth of a Nation" could have been called "The Clansman"; and if two or three serious historical scenes, introduced to sanctify the rest, could have been kept out of it; if we could have some censorship that would prevent unscrupulous people taking advantage of the situation to combine real history and fictitious romance to the disadvantage of both, I think we should be better off. One of these boys said that the morality of the film did not concern him much,—he went for amusement only; but we think the morality of it does concern us all, and we should be glad to hear what Dr. Crothers has to say about that.

REV. DR. S. M. CROTHERS, of Cambridge.

As I have expressed myself on other occasions in regard to the "Birth of a Nation" I shall this afternoon address myself particularly to teachers of history in regard to their responsibility.

We are passing through a peculiar period. At no time has sound historical judgment been more necessary, and yet at no time has there been such a difficulty in getting sound and effective instruction. The teachers of history in the schools are not the ones who are most to blame for the condition of mind of the younger generation. We must go to "the man higher up," the historian himself.

That which the school can do is to introduce the pupil to the reading of history. But of late there has been a fashion in the academic mind to disparage the popular historian who seeks to present history in its large free outlines, and in all its human interest.

One of the most distinguished of present day English historians, Mr. Trevelyan, has summed the situation up, very accurately, in his essay on *Clio as a Muse*. He asks whether there is any more a Muse of History. Mr. Trevelyan says that, "two generations ago, history was a part of our national literature, written by persons moving at large in the world of letters and politics; of recent years the popular influence of history has greatly diminished, history has by its own friends been proclaimed a science for specialists, not literature for the common reader of books, and the common reader of books has accepted his discharge." "Ought history," he asks, "to be a mere accumulation of facts about the past, or ought it also to be the interpretation of the

facts about the past? Or, one step further, ought it not to be not merely the accumulation and interpretation of facts about the past, but also the exposition of these facts and opinions in their full emotional and intellectual value to a wide public?"

There you get down to the real question why we want history taught in our schools. As a mere science, cut up into little parts, it takes its place with any of the other sciences, only it is confessedly a less perfect science, and as a means merely of intellectual discipline it interests only a few. But to give history its full emotional and intellectual value to large classes of people, to make them see the broad outlines of the history of their own country and the history of their country in relation to the world and the civilization of which it is part, that is something that is supremely important. The question that comes, to the schools is whether the teachers are really awake themselves to the supreme importance of historical teaching.

What we want is very simple. We demand not profound or accurate knowledge of the things which interest specialists. We want such a knowledge of the broad outlines of our history and of its main tendencies as will enable our children to know whether they are acting and feeling as true Americans. We want them to see our National ideals, and to know how they were developed and what they cost.

A few years ago we had such teachers who popularized American history. John Fiske was such an interpreter. He made us see events in the light of great principles. Thomas Wentworth Higginson was not afraid to give to our history "its full emotional value."

Edward Everett Hale made no pretensions to historical accuracy in matters of detail. His method was carelessly impressionistic. And yet he was himself the embodiment of American history. He loved to tell the tales of what had happened here. The tales were told as the old Norse Sagas were told, to inspire the new generation with the spirit of the old.

I remember one day when Dr. Hale had dropped in to my home for lunch. When we were going out of the gate, a school master and his boys were coming up Oxford street. The teacher said, "Boys: this is Dr. Edward Everett Hale. Perhaps he would like to say a few words to you."

Then Dr. Hale leaned against the fence and gave a five minute address on so much of American history as was sug-

gested by the environment. He pointed to the site of Oliver Wendell Holmes's birth place, to the last survivors of the willows planted as a part of the palisade against the Indians, and pointed out the line of march to Bunker Hill. Dr. Hale told the boys nothing that they had not known before. But he did something more important,—he made them feel that the history belonged to them.

Now, we may be as accurate in details as possible, the more accurate we are the better in the teaching, but the question is: Does the present generation really *know* the history of this country as it ought to be known? My impression is that it does not, that it has lost something, and it has lost it just for the reason that Mr. Trevelyan speaks of in England, because a false conception has entered into the minds of the leaders of the educational world in regard to the use of history as a popular medium of instruction.

Then we come back to this question of the moving picture, as to how far it can be an educational help in the teaching of history. I am inclined to think that it can be a very considerable help, provided that you yourselves have the historical sense and enthusiasm and are using it for a historical purpose. But suppose you think of history merely as a sequence of events, as things that happened, and that if you get that quick sequence of events, seeing that one thing happened after another thing, you are teaching history. Well, if that is your idea of teaching history, a motion picture can teach a great deal more of it than you can, because it can suggest a great many more events, and it can get them sweeping along very much more rapidly.

Or suppose you think of it simply as you would of what we call *current events*, that you read history just as you would read a newspaper. One thing happens, and then another thing happens, and so on, and you don't know why it happens, or what connection there is, or anything about it; you only see the successive happenings. The motion picture is the reduction to an absurdity of that notion of history as an accumulation of facts, or simply as a sequence of facts, because it can teach that very much more quickly and very much more impressively than you can. It can make an impression; that is to say, it is simply appealing to the eye to see things that are rapidly going about; it is appealing to the most primitive instinct. Some animal psychologists say that almost all instincts can be reduced to one primitive instinct, that is, the instinct to follow a rapidly

moving object. A kitten will follow a mouse, but it will follow a string just as quickly; it will follow anything that moves rapidly. When the thing stops, the kitten's interest stops at the same time. Now, that instinctive reaction is everywhere present. On a certain grade of intelligence, by rapidly moving things you can always produce your desired result.

What I want to emphasize is that here we have an instrument which is able to produce that kind of impression in regard to any historical event whatever. Suppose you want to produce a feeling of abhorrence in regard to any class of people. All you have to do is to produce a series of abhorrent pictures and have them pass rapidly upon the eyes. You do not need to tell any lie. All you have to do is to select your facts. Choose only such facts as tend to produce the impression you desire to make.

The astonishing thing which the discussion of this photoplay has revealed is the exceedingly superficial idea that so many people have about what constitutes historical truth. They think that anything that has actually happened makes history. It does not make history; history is a very different thing. Wordsworth defined poetry as "emotion remembered in tranquility." Now, history is of the same nature. There are facts that are remembered in tranquility. "Every battle of the warrior is with confused noise and garments rolled in blood," but after a time we think it over and we select out of all these happenings the things which were really important. Then you have a history of liberty, then you have a history of tolerance, then you have a history of civilization, then you have a history of the United States of America. The historical judgment is not the registering of sense impressions. It is the result of reflection.

The dangerous thing about the moving picture, whenever we allow it to be used as a substitute for something else rather than as an illustration of real history, is that it does not make any appeal and cannot make any appeal to reflection or to the moral sentiment. The New Testament gives the whole point of the moral interpretation of things. "Judge not after appearance. Judge righteous judgment." The two things are antithetic. The judgment of appearance is one thing; the *righteous* judgment, which goes to motives and causes, that is the only thing which we as believers in history have any very great interest in.

You can take any class or nation, you may select your historical period, and you can present that class or that nation in such a way as to arouse the bitterest hatred among thoughtless persons; and you can do it all under the name of history. That is the reason why I think that some sort of regulation which is different from the regulation of the ordinary stage or of the book is necessary in the interest of public order. The point is that here is something which can do what the other instruments of art are not able to do. They are dealing, after all, with persons. The moving picture allows the person who wishes to carry on a propaganda of hate to throw upon the stage not one person who is obnoxious, but hundreds and hundreds of them, until without saying a word he produces the impression that those hateful characteristics belong to all the people of that class.

Now for an example. In a so-called infidel series a number of years ago they used to publish a book that was called "The Crimes of the Clergy." What the writer did was out of all the history of the past and the records of the courts to pick every criminal act carried on by any black sheep who had passed at any time as a clergyman. Reading that book, one could reflect upon it and see that it meant that *some* clergymen were criminals; but it did not prove that all clergymen were criminals, or even the majority. On the stage I am not sensitive, and I should not particularly object to one criminal clergyman appearing. When there were two, I should begin to take notice. When there were half a dozen, it would seem to me a little over doing. But if they threw a hundred or a thousand of those clergymen on the stage, so that I saw them passing on to their various crimes, I should feel that I had a grievance. And that is the way every one of us feels in regard to that kind of an instrument.

One of the things which I most objected to in this play of *The Birth of a Nation*, was the use which was made of the name and of the works of the President of the United States. The quotations from Woodrow Wilson's *History of the United States* gave an altogether false impression of his judgments as an historian. The ordinary citizen resents such use made of the name of the President of the United States. The teacher of history should resent such use of the name of a broad-minded and patriotic historian.

There are questions for the teachers of history to consider. You have as teachers of history a great responsibility. You are guardians of something that is very sacred,

namely, the storied past of this country. Things happen, tragedies like that of this year happen, there are times when the whole nation is called upon to suffer. Such a time of bitter trial was our Civil War. What did we get out of it? What does any nation get out of any time of trial? All that it gets out of it are a few sacred memories and a few great lessons, some things which lift men above themselves, some acts of heroism ever to be remembered, and some solemn lessons learned. Now, the people of the immediate generation that suffers these things, learn the lesson. They feel it. What about the next generation? The next generation has no way whatever of getting any good, of learning anything from the past; it is no better off, save as through reflection men are able to tell what these great lessons were. What was the lesson of the settlement of this country? What was the great thing settled by the Revolutionary war? What were the things settled by the agony of the Civil war? If the teacher of history can see nothing but certain moving pictures, just one thing happening after the other, then the moving picture is a very good substitute for such a teacher. It is a great improvement in every way. But if one is really anxious to see these precious lessons of our own past and gain inspiration, then I think the teacher of history is the one who ought to be very sensitive in regard to any teaching of history that is simply "after appearance" and does not attempt righteous—that is, thoughtful—judgment.

I should say, then, that the moving picture in the hands of the true teacher may perhaps be an instrument that could often be used effectively. As coming before the public in any way as a substitute for such careful teaching, I think it has very great dangers to the community.

The PRESIDENT. It has been said that if "The Birth of a Nation" were produced frankly as one of those motion picture interpretations of a bit of literature, so called, such as we discussed and exhibited last fall, very few would have had much quarrel with it, because then it could be taken for what it is; but whether there is a propaganda behind it or not, it pretends to be something it is not. It is not, from any point of view, a fair treatment of either side, especially of the development of the black race. I think perhaps Miss Moffat will tell us something of the southern view that bears on this question. Miss Moffat.

MISS ADELENE MOFFAT.

"The Birth of a Nation" brings into the open, with an assurance singularly unqualified by any consideration of good feeling, good taste or good judgment, a spirit that has always existed in the coarser elements of southern society, a spirit opposed to the principles of modern progress, whenever those principles are applied to the Negro race, a spirit which sacrifices justice, common sense, and the normal instincts of humanity to unthinking prejudice and an inflated egotism. Unfortunately, this spirit, which the better and more thoughtful elements in the South had hoped would disappear with time, seems rather to be increasing aggressively instead of proving to be a type of provincialism likely to fade before larger cultural opportunities. This narrow and perverted point of view, no longer localized, seeks a wider field in the guise of education.

There were in the South at the close of the war enough men of the higher type, intellectually and morally, to have met the changed conditions of that period in a spirit that would have brought order out of the chaos if they had not been overpowered in numbers and noisiness by another class, lacking their sincerity and their breadth of view, a class that both consciously and unconsciously determined to discredit reconstruction as offered by the North and to make it inoperative. The better element unfortunately was without any commanding personality that could furnish leadership. The individuals here and there who had constructive minds, humanitarian vision, and the knowledge of history which could give them reliable units of measurement, were opposed by a diligently recruited party determined at all costs to preserve its own tradition, the exploitation of the Negro, an unfounded assumption of social superiority to the whites of other sections of the country, and, not infrequently, unchallenged superiority to the laws of their own. They did not hesitate to lend themselves to the most brutal forms of intimidation and to the most unscrupulous or petty of meannesses and dishonesties. As individuals they were seldom men of true courage and they were incapable of either thinking or acting alone. Strong in their prejudices, limited both in knowledge and foresight, they cloaked mental and moral timidity under a noisy bravado. Group action was a psychological necessity. Their courage was apt to be stimulated by that other ready aid to valor, whiskey.

When in the history of the world have the best people of any community found it necessary to ride forth at night masked like burglars and assassins, in cowardly superiority of numbers, a regiment against an individual—and often an unarmed individual. Is it to be supposed for a moment that this is the ethics of warfare that southern chivalry endorses?

Even if these night-riders can make clear their title to a higher public esteem fifty years ago than I am willing to admit they ever enjoyed, what shall we say of the type of mind, of the standards of public morality, that will in 1915, with a half century's advance in social evolution, with all the marvelous awakening of the social conscience, still, either honestly or dishonestly claim that the policy and the practices of the Ku Klux Klan were justified or justifiable under any circumstances? It is an outrage to one's sense of historical honesty, to the Christian tradition and to every humanitarian instinct to see this evil band of lynchers and intimidators represented in the garb of crusaders with the cross of Jesus of Nazareth instead of with skull and cross-bones, the flaming torch and the bloody rope.

One of the most pathetic mistakes we make in the South is to confuse loyalty to our section with the short sighted and ultimately futile attempt to justify persons and practices admitted among ourselves to deserve disapprobation and rebuke. We are learning slowly, very slowly, that it is the truth that shall make us free, that we must be judged by the bad as well as by the good elements in our community. We are beginning to see that it is only by first correctly diagnosing our diseases of the body politic, and afterward if necessary applying the knife, that we can ever hope to keep pace with progressive peoples. It is not easy for the patient to diagnose his own disease. We are gradually coming into consciousness that today even the South is suffering in a thousand ways from the fact that we have had for several generations an institution the evils of which we have tried to conceal, an institution which we have had to defend against the outer world. The institution has passed, but the habit of defence remains. When the Negro was freed, the white South was not freed from its old time slavery to fear. The cause of fear was removed, but the habit of mind remained. Merely the terms of the equation were changed. Fear of a Negro uprising plus Northern interference was changed to fear of Negro Supremacy plus

northern interference. The habit of self-justification was raised to the *nth* power. To these obstacles to natural development must be added one of the greatest of the tragedies of the war—of any war—the leaders, potential and actual, left dead on the battlefields.

The generation growing up after the war was brought up in too large a measure by overwrought, inexperienced women. This could not be helped but it must not be forgotten. It is not strange that our politics and our social ethics are sometimes almost hysterically timid. The natural reaction from fear is to crush or destroy the thing we fear.

Born since the war, brought up in Reconstruction times this party is now in the prime of its thinking and working powers. It is filled with a deep and steady faith in the glorious possibilities of our country. We do not like to think of her as eternally swathed in crape, whining for sympathy—or as the all too conscious cripple, keeping his sores open and forever removing his bandages to show his wounds that he may feel his own importance, or from a canny instinct for material gain. Still less do we like to think of our South as the beaten contestant who cannot shake hands with his old opponent but must pour into every ear that will listen, the tale of his grievances, explanations of his failure, and insinuating slanders, or who strikes an attitude and calls upon the world to admire his noble resignation. In the good old sounding phrase of our fathers, the whole question was “settled by the arbitrament of arms,” and we would keep the fine old spirit that went with the phrase.

At the close of the war there were men and women who cheerfully, without malice, without enervating self-pity, set about the readjustment of their private lives and their public responsibilities to meet the changed conditions. Even at that time, it was not impossible to find men who had fought through the four years, who had no quarrel with the result of the war. They were as glad as we are now that slavery was abolished—and some even that the doctrine of secession had been defeated. They read history and they read the signs of the times. They realized that the ex-slave was the future laboring man of the South. A large land-holder in the South—a pure black of the Congo type, a cotton-field slave before the war, said to me once, “We have never had any trouble with the white people in our district, we have been very fortunate in having some of our fine old families

stay right on here." In that case the former master sold land to his slaves—taught them to farm small parcels of land and hired them instead of strange "hands" to run his own plantation.

In a settlement house in Cambridge, which has been in operation for more than thirty years, in a neighborhood where there have been about an equal number of colored and white, both races have come to the house as a matter of course, and have been together in the nursery and kindergarten, in playground, class-room and social halls from babyhood to manhood and womanhood. There has never been a single instance of intermarriage.

After all it is the white people of the South who suffer most from any injustice to the Negro, if conditions are made such that the Negro is unable to keep pace with the working classes of competing communities and nations. Once convince the world that the Negro is vicious, criminal, lazy and diseased, and he is made unemployable. All incentive for progress is stifled in him. Ultimately he must go back to the community to be supported.

There is another aspect of the question even more serious. Every time we try to prevent the Negro from enjoying the rights guaranteed to him by the constitution and the privileges that enlightened and progressive civilizations afford everywhere to a struggling proletariat, we compromise our own honor, and lower our own standards. We are bringing up our young people in certain sections in the South in a system of political dishonesty and corruption which is a serious menace to the whole nation.

The constructive elements in the South must count upon the constructive elements in the North, to help in the slow process of education that will be necessary before we can be free of some of the anachronisms in the South, which are an amazement to foreigners and a bitter sorrow and handicap to ten millions of our own people. To this small but earnest group of progressives the implications of "The Birth of a Nation," its effect upon unthinking minds, its capitalization of the worst prejudices of the people, its insidious emotional appeal, its demoralizing teachings to well intentioned but ignorant people, both North and South—all this is deplorable.

It is not the pretentious claim of the film to be history, that constitutes one of the most serious charges against it. Even if it were blazoned on screen and programme that

it is *not* history but only an arbitrary grouping of figures and scenes, some of which might have happened, most of which did not and could not,—it would still be dangerous and demoralizing propaganda in its reaction upon an unsuspecting public. Here are a very few of the remarks heard as people come out of the theatre and elsewhere:

"I've always hated the niggers but I never knew why till I saw the 'Birth of a Nation.'"

"That shows you what the niggers are really like."

"You can't civilize Negroes—they are all savages."

"Slavery is the only institution that the Negroes can thrive under."

"The proper place for a Negro is behind my chair."

"If they would get up a Ku Klux Klan now, I would join it. I would like to string up a few."

"They are beasts, all of them."

(Heard on the Boston Common as a group of colored citizens were quietly walking along):

"Here come a lot of niggers; let's hang them; there are plenty of trees."

A quiet, and entirely respectable working girl coming out of her shop on Boylston street, was struck by a white man who swore at her, and called after her; "It is you and your — color who are making all this trouble about the 'Birth of a Nation.'"

One of the commonest reactions is: "I think all the niggers ought to be sent back to the place they came from."

How do they propose to deport ten million American born citizens? What will our southern Shylocks do when, in order to deport the one-eighth of Negro blood they must in many instances deport also the other seven-eighths white blood? What are they going to say to the hard-headed business men of the North and South whose capital is involved? How also shall they reckon with those other white southerners who will say, "Do you think we are going to stand for any such injustice? Do you suppose that we are going to take by force the unpaid labor of these people for two hundred years, build up with it our country, now their country also, and then send them back to a country theirs no longer? America is the country of the colored as well as the white southerner, honestly earned on tilled fields and on battle fields. From the Revolution to the Spanish War they have borne arms and acquitted themselves with honor.

The proposition is of course preposterous. It would hardly seem worth mentioning if it were not for the ill feeling, the obstacles to progress and the confusion of issues which result.

In the battle against such propaganda as "The Birth of a Nation", Boston is an important citadel—there should be no Trojan horse admitted. May I say that I can see no way in which this film can be altered to make it either a desirable or a safe influence in any community in America. It is fundamentally wrong in its conception, a glorification of mob law, most insidiously successful in stirring up race prejudice and thereby running a risk of complicating grave issues. I think the film should be withdrawn promptly and forever and from all places.

In the ringing words of your own poet:

"Come let us take new guides and be Americans!"

PROF. A. B. HART, of Harvard University.

I am glad to be here again; for we have a common question to discuss, not a northern question nor a southern question, but a national question,—namely, what shall be done in order that the American youth as it grows up may have some adequate idea of what has gone on in the past? As a people we are intensely interested in our own past. For many years this was not a country in which there were remarkable intellectual or artistic events; great builders, great books, and great pictures were few. Hence the main conversational interest in large circles was the great deeds of the past.

The Revolution mastered the community for more than half a century for it was a national event in which all sections participated. Your grandfather was at Bunker Hill, and his children never were tired of talking about his services. As there was no sectional division on the question, it answered very well for small conversational change all over the Union.

Then came the war of 1812; but unfortunately, unless you lived in seafaring circles and had something to do with those that go down to the sea in ships, there was not much glory to be got out of the war of 1812. If your grandfather fought with Jackson at New Orleans, you might boast; otherwise, you had not much to brag about.

Then came the Civil War, which rent the whole community; it not only divided the nation but divided many hearths. Nobody who lived through the Civil War can fail to realize the tremendous enlarging effect upon many minds, of those immense national events. The war is over. In the North, it has ceased to be a subject of general conversation, except in circles of army people and of officers of the Civil War. There is a lot of it in the Loyal Legion and the Grand Army of the Republic and among families who remember what passed. In the South, however, the Civil War is still one of the main subjects of polite conversation. You go to Richmond and make a call, or you go out in the evening. Within fifteen minutes somebody will be talking to you about the Civil War, and within twenty minutes about General Lee. To be sure, General Lee is a great national figure. I am not going to be deprived of General Lee simply because my father and General Lee happened to be in two different armies, fighting each other. Whatever there is that is good and great about General Lee, or Stonewall Jackson, or any other southerner in that contest, are my countrymen's, and I inherit as much as their own descendants the national glory of their high character and great achievement, and their personal self-sacrifice and devotion to what they believed to be a good cause. In the South, the Civil War is still the great thing that has happened in the last seventy-five years; and I take it that that is the reason why it is still the subject of so much discussion.

Furthermore, we at the North lived through the war; sons and brothers of every family went into the struggle; but Northerners did not personally live through actual Reconstruction, which was a very confused period, full of terribly difficult problems. To this day, many otherwise intelligent people seem to think that the only thing that could be done when the war was over was to say, "Come back, my dear brethren, and take your seats at the family table again. There is no farther trouble." There was farther trouble; the war left a lot of troubles that had to be settled by somebody. If they were not settled by the general government, by the aid of northern votes, they would necessarily be settled by southern statesmen with the aid of southern votes. Something had to be done to crystallize the results of the war. The reconstruction amendments were necessary, unless some time or other the war was going to be fought over. The nation could not avoid putting on record the fact that there had been a war.

That period has long gone by; but now we are reviving the Civil War. . . . Now apparently we must again discuss those old controversies, because the rising generation knows nothing of them from personal experience, and little from the remembrances of its parents.

It is interesting to see how successful the South is. I feel an enormous admiration for the people of that section of the country, because they have efficiency reduced to the *nth* power when it comes to historical questions. For instance, sixty years ago a system of African slavery existed in the United States. That is incontrovertible. There are, I suppose, three or four hundred contemporary narratives describing the life of slaves, some favorable on the whole to slavery, some very unfavorable, some neutral. Therefore, if you wish to know what slavery was, you can find out without even visiting a plantation. You know the worst of slavery, because the literature of that period is full of horrors; you know the best side of it, because you have such books as Mrs. Smede's *Memorials of a Southern Planter*. It is an interesting fact about slavery that nobody in the South now defends the institution. I have met a great many people in the South, but I never met a man or woman who wanted to see slavery back. Colonel Haskell of Columbia, an eminent man, a leader in his state,—his daughter is a mighty successful head of a Boston school,—once said to me that the Civil War was worth all it cost to the South, because the Southerners got rid of the responsibility of slavery. Yet many people in the South want us to believe that slavery was a delightful thing while it lasted. They constantly hold before us the picture of the great mansion with the colored butler behind the guests' chairs, a trusted member of the family, a major domo, consulted in family matters. At the time the war broke out, there may have been all told 400 to 500 such families, and no more, that lived in that stately fashion. Then we must not forget that the trusted butler had arrived at the summit of ambition under slavery; no slave could expect a better thing than he had. But that butler's grandson may now be a banker, or a successful business man, or the president of a college. The butler and his family are not typical slaveholding households—they represent the rare cases. On most plantations life was narrower, and slavery was dreary.

Upon the main question of slavery, there is something admirable in a feeling of a great many of the southern

people that they must stand by their grandfathers; but they go too far in their disposition to consider that it is disrespectful to their ancestors to admit that slavery was a thoroughly bad and demoralizing institution. I am the descendant of a slaveholder, my great-grandfather, Judge George Hornell, who founded the vigorous town of Hornell, in western New York, was a slaveholder; and there is good reason to believe that he was not by any means a model slaveholder. Well, must I go through life with the sins of that great-grandfather tied around my neck? God forbid! George Hornell sinned against his own lights; he did what he knew to be wrong. He has gone to his rest, and I trust that the Recording Angel calculated a favorable balance in his behalf. But why should thousands of good and worthy people go through life excusing a now abandoned system, which at the bottom was founded on cruelty,—because otherwise they will seem to condemn and to find fault with their grandfathers? Let your grandfathers take care of themselves; and let us take care of our present national difficulties and sins.

Some of the general issues of the Civil War are brought out in "The Birth of a Nation." That spectacle has many pretty pictures, but an astonishing number of false costumes. The young persons particularly do not wear dresses of 1861, but the more picturesque costumes of 1846. The uniforms of Union and Confederate soldiers can be reproduced; and quantities of those warriors ride and charge up and down under a lurid red light. It is amazing how many people get killed in action in the movies, without anybody being really hurt! Everybody is picked up alive out of the fracas, ready to go into the next scene. . . .

A frequent delusion with regard to the Civil War does not happen to come out in this series of pictures; that is, the belief which some Northerners share that there was a peculiar and superabundant virtue in Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson because they went with their states. Certainly they were conscientious and prayerful men; they are an addition to our galaxy of American heroes. However, did Robert E. Lee possess a larger conscience than George H. Thomas, who was also a Virginian and who stood by the Union? Can you say that Stonewall Jackson was a more conscientious and upright man than Farragut, who was also a Virginian? Many of the Virginians who had to face that difficulty felt that it was contrary to their duty and their consciences to go with their states; and they have just the

same right as Lee and Jackson to be considered upright, just men, who made a right choice. It is perfectly ridiculous to argue that the South must have been right, because Robert E. Lee, a man of high character, was on that side. What about Abraham Lincoln, a man actually born in the South? His conscience bade him stand by the Union. Let us also remember and teach that Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson were standing by a decaying cause; that they adhered to a body of men who were defying the whole civilized world on the question of slavery. In 1861 the only place left in America, outside of Cuba and Brazil, in which men of European blood were habitually holding and selling slaves, was the Southern states of the United States of America. I am sorry that men of such high character as Lee and Jackson could not see more clearly that they were making a mistake. Since that cause finally perished, we must at least suppose and teach that slavery was and is contrary to our national principles.

Now we come to Reconstruction. That is a bad, dark story. Many disagreeable things happened in that period, though it was not as bad as those people believed who went through it. No Southern state suffered from a corrupt and disgraceful government so severely as the city of New York suffered at that time from the Tweed Ring. The southern state government had been simple; the state taxes had been very low. The new state governments were not by any means in the hands of ignorant negroes. Many ignorant southern white men took part. Somehow the "scalawag" who played such a large part seems entirely to be left out of the "Birth of a Nation." You would not suppose from these pictures that in fact a great number of the Republicans in the Reconstruction state legislatures were native southern whites, who went into the fracas, partly from conscientious reasons, and partly from a desire to get something out of it. It is a serious historical blunder to lead people to suppose that all, or any considerable part of the Republican politicians in the South during that troubled period, came from the North. The actual number of immigrants, men like Governor Chamberlain of South Carolina and Governor Ames of Mississippi, who went down there and got into office from the North, was very small.

Many serious mistakes were made in Reconstruction,—mistakes on both sides. I have talked with southern men who lived through the period who acknowledged that their

side made serious mistakes. General Edward McCready in Charleston, than whom there could not be a higher minded or purer minded man, an officer who served manfully in the Confederacy, said at the time to his people, "You are making a mistake. You are crowding too hard." Undoubtedly it was the purpose of certain Republican politicians in Washington to fix it up so that there would be a permanent Republican party in the South. It is true that Thaddeus Stevens headed that movement. On the other hand, it is equally true that there was a general Northern belief that if you gave the suffrage to the negroes, they would come up to it. That had been the effect on the immigrants for years; therefore it seemed reasonable to expect that the negroes, as soon as they had the necessary schooling and experience would show themselves competent for self-government. We do not know exactly what would have happened if that opportunity of voting had been continued, because the Carpet Bag government lasted so short a time. In Virginia the Conservatives (that is, the Southern white Democrats) got control of the state government in a little more than a year after the state was re-admitted to the Union. In Alabama the period of reconstruction government was twenty-eight months. In Louisiana, Florida, South Carolina, and Mississippi, it lasted longer, and things were worse; one reason being that in South Carolina and Mississippi the negro population was more numerous than the white population. In South Carolina there was a particularly degraded set of negroes, who had been slaves on unfavorable plantations.

In any case, we are sure that one of the most telling scenes in "The Birth of a Nation" never happened during Reconstruction. The pictures, which I saw the other night, depict a company of United States soldiers in uniform, commanded by a white officer, taking possession of a town and shooting down white people for no offence whatever; running amuck up and down the streets, and behaving like fiends. I take on myself confidently to assert that such an incident never happened in one single solitary instance. It is significant that from the South there was never any serious complaint of the military governments, which in Georgia lasted from 1865 till 1871. They suspended legislatures, they set aside the ordinances of cities in some cases, they were very decided; but the general testimony is that, with few exceptions, the military commanders honestly strove

to give everybody a fair chance. Such an incident as that riot, revolt, practical mutiny of a company of United States troops, never happened, never could have happened. If it had happened, no matter what the occasion, those men would have been court martialled, and some of them would inevitably have been shot, by order of the United States Government. My father was a member of the United States Army, and I am not willing to stand here and allow it to go out to the world through a fake series of pictures that the army of which he was a member contained regiments or companies or commands which were allowed to wreak their will upon defenceless white people. The thing never happened. It is a slander to put it in pictures that are presented to Northern audiences and to try to make them think that it did happen. It is not true. Of course it is dramatic, and that is why it was put in. Undoubtedly there were arrests of white people by soldiers, there were confinements, there were trials, particularly of the Ku Klux Klan; there were many convictions; but it was all done in the open light of day, subject to the comment of visitors and newspaper correspondents.

Another question is that of the negroes in Reconstruction. The Reconstruction acts were framed by white people in Washington. The negroes had a very small part in it, because the legislatures in which they were members were short-lived. Some of those legislatures were bad—almost as bad as the contemporary government of New York City. The South Carolina legislature at Columbia was extravagant, though it did not wear the bed-ticking trousers allotted to it by "The Birth of a Nation." However, the greater part of the legislation in all the Southern states was done by white members. For instance, in Virginia only one-fourth of the population were negroes; in some states, the proportion was less than that. It is ridiculous to throw upon the negroes all the responsibility for that state of things.

Moving pictures are the most insidious form of argument, because few people who see them stop to think, "Why, these are not really photographs of something that happened in 1869; they have simply dressed up a lot of people in 1914; they have built a pasteboard town for them; they have furnished a building. The actors put on clothes that they never wore before; and they can do anything they like, without regard to history." The artificial character of the

whole show does not always occur to young people or older people who see such exhibitions. The result, or at least the effort of the show, is substantially to make out that the negroes were then and are now a class so inhumanly criminal, that something violent ought to be done to them, they ought to be suppressed, they ought to be dealt with in some new fashion. I protest against that as I would protest against any similar attempt to vilify the Irish, or the Germans, or the Slavs, or the Scandinavians, or any other race that rests within the United States.

The character of a race is one of its precious possessions. We all know it is not true that all the members of any race are criminal. We know that certain crimes are of the very rarest; that but for the human cruelty of the lynchings and the spreading of the details abroad, there are crimes which would hardly ever happen, that such crimes are not characteristic. Yet the effort is made by these pictures to persuade us that the negro race is untrustworthy and criminal above all other races. The figures selected for these pictures are figures of a brutal countenance. It is as though you tried to make a moving picture of typical Bostonians and chose as actors from whom the picture should be taken only men and women just out of the penitentiary. The negroes in "The Birth of a Nation" were selected because they had repellent countenances, because they were going to look bad. If they did not look bad naturally, they were instructed as actors to look as violent and as criminal as possible. Therefore the pictures are not typical of the race which is especially selected for animadversion, and it is difficult to resist the belief that it is the positive purpose of this exhibition to arouse hatred against the negro. The piece is a deliberate attempt to make the people of the North think that their fathers were wholly wrong, and that the fathers of the Southern people were wholly right, and the only people who were right in the Civil War and Reconstruction. It is also an effort to persuade us that a race which includes many of our neighbors and friends, is a totally debased race; and that is an essential falsehood.

"The Birth of a Nation" gives an opportunity to express an opinion and to discuss the general subject of the effect of moving pictures. They have been one of the most effective and insidious means of reaching the human mind that has ever been devised. A vast number of children here in Boston will get from the movies their first clear and dis-

tinct idea as to what slavery was and how the Civil War came about, and what kind of people went into the Union army, and how they were allowed by their officers to behave. They are going to get their first impression. If we are lucky, six or seven or eight years later, we may come along as teachers and try to persuade those young people that what they have taken in with the air that they breathe is wrong, that their first preconceptions are mistaken.

The last thing that is desirable in this country is to encourage sectional teaching or sectional textbooks or sectional feeling. Certainly there is no Northern person in this audience who more values his friends in the South than I. Nobody more appreciates the task and difficulties and the accomplishments of the Southern people. Nobody is more alive to the terrific difficulties of the race question in the South. Nevertheless, those are not our difficulties in the North. We don't ask anybody to bring up a lot of pictures here in order to show us the terrible danger of allowing our negro fellow citizens to dwell among us in peace and quiet, without being pointed out from the rest of the community as reservoirs of crime.

Something positive must be done, toward supervising moving pictures in general. I recently saw in Scotland a very fine movie show of *Ivanhoe*. People jumped out of castles, and climbed the walls, and were thrown down from ladders; and all the most approved mediaeval ways of getting rid of your enemies were employed. I did not care whether the costumes were accurate or invented. I was not interested in the question whether the knights were like the knights who really lived. That was not my business. It is my business, however, to notice how the history of my own country shall be presented. You cannot prevent people from telling lies, or from making historical errors, but you surely can prevent people, whether coming out of our own midst or coming from distant communities, from making trouble between us and our neighbors. I believe to the bottom of my heart that that is the main purpose of "The Birth of a Nation" exhibition. Therefore I am opposed to it from top to toe.

The PRESIDENT. If there is a propaganda behind these pictures, I should like to have you stay ten minutes longer, and let Mr. Cobleigh tell you about it.

MR. ROLFE COBLEIGH, *Associate Editor of the Congregationalist*.

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen:—While many of my friends are expressing their approval of Thomas Dixon, I feel that I ought to say a word of appreciation for the service that he rendered to me the day before his moving picture play was first presented in Boston. He removed every doubt that I had in my mind as to the right or wrong of "The Birth of a Nation." He explained to me what he hoped to accomplish by its influence throughout the country. It is of great service to us in judging the play to learn the motives back of it, to learn just what its promoters are trying to do. Mr. Dixon came to my office apparently for the purpose of convincing me that this play was all right; he did convince me that his purpose in it was all wrong. A view of the pictures upon the screen in the Tremont Theatre strengthened that conviction and proved to me that D. W. Griffith's startling and melodramatic motion pictures presented just the propaganda of falsehood and prejudice that Mr. Dixon admitted was the real purpose which he had in view.

Mr. Dixon says that he wants to teach the children of the United States, and all whom he can teach by means of this play, his version of the history of the Reconstruction Period. He wishes to make us and our children believe that the Ku Klux Klan was a chivalric army of crusaders inspired by pure religion and made up of the best white men of the South; that it was organized to avenge assaults by colored men upon white women and girls, to protect their virtue, to protect property and personal rights, and to regain the white control of the ballot; all of which he represents had been menaced or lost in a reign of terror caused by vicious colored people whom he leads us to infer were the only kind of colored people except the ignorant and servile ones, who "knew their place" and wished to remain slaves. Incited by Northern political villains, whose dictator was Thaddeus Stevens, they were in political control, he says, until suppressed by the Ku Klux Klan. He says that his father was a Baptist minister in North Carolina and left his church to join the Ku Klux Klan, remaining with that organization until it was disbanded; so he knows what he is talking about.

Authoritative history and people who lived in the South during the Reconstruction Period tell us that the Ku Klux

Klan was guilty of treason, wholesale murder, and many other crimes, including the rape of colored women, and that the real reign of terror during the Reconstruction Period was caused by the Ku Klux Klan; that white men who would not vote with the former slave holding oligarchy, as well as the recently emancipated slaves, in hundreds of cases were the innocent victims. Many bad mistakes were made during the Reconstruction Period, but the whole truth was far from what is represented in "The Birth of a Nation." Official records prove that the last part of this play does not show historical events but fabricated scenes which never existed in fact.

To convince the audience that the character of the colored man is what Mr. Dixon represents it to be, he has the renegade, Gus, appear with a single lustful purpose, of which a white girl is the victim. An educated colored man, with a large proportion of white blood, appears in Lynch, the lieutenant governor, and he has the same lustful purpose, of which another white girl is the victim. Then the colored men appear in masses to emphasize the argument, and a black legislature reveals its most violent and disgusting enthusiasm over the passage of a bill to permit the marriage of white and colored people. In other masses, as mobs, the colored people give vent to every form of pent up savagery. There could be no more subtle and no more bold and passionate appeal to race prejudice and hatred than these scenes present.

Finally, we come to Thomas Dixon's solution of the race problem. It is not democracy; it is not loyalty to the constitution of the United States or existing law in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; it is achieving absolute white supremacy and getting rid of all the colored people. I suggested to Mr. Dixon the difficulty of deporting ten million American citizens to Africa, as he proposed, but he referred to Lincoln's scheme for colonizing at the close of the Civil War, and seriously argued that it could be done now. He hopes to create such public sentiment that a substantial beginning may be made in the near future, and argues that the task may be completed within a century. He says that many of the colored people are in favor of colonization and could be relied upon to help begin the movement. He says that the Negroes of the United States are divided into three factions: first, those led by Booker T. Washington, who emphasize industrial education; then the

Du Bois faction, who claim everything; and finally, a faction led by Bishop Turner, who favors a return to Africa.

Years ago Bishop Turner did advocate the African colony scheme, and helped to send a shipload of colored people from the South to Africa. Shipwreck, disease, and starvation combined to make the experiment a tragic failure, and but few survivors were left to tell the story. Since then, neither Bishop Turner nor any other man has commanded the serious support of American Negroes in any substantial colonization scheme.

If we are to accept such a social and political propaganda as that of Thomas Dixon against any race in the citizenship of our mixed population of many races, where will it end? If we let such a vicious propaganda continue its course unchecked, what will become of our democracy? What will become of the principles of freedom and equal rights to enjoy life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, regardless of color, creed or previous condition of servitude?

One of the baneful effects of this enterprise in Boston has been the control of the newspapers which has been exercised through the advertising departments. The editors of some of the leading papers privately admit that this has been one of the most flagrant cases of suppressing facts and real editorial convictions that has ever developed in this city. A well known reporter of a Boston paper of large circulation tells me that his city editor consigned to the waste basket an article that truly reported facts, which indicated that the colored people are not simply moved by hysteria in this matter, but that back of their protest are deep indignation and real distress; and then the city editor told the reporter that their paper would not print anything unfavorable to "The Birth of a Nation." The garbled, distorted reports in some of the papers of protest meetings, at which distinguished citizens have spoken against this photo play are a disgrace to Boston journalism. Some of the papers have refused to report these meetings at all.

One newspaper refused to take a paid advertisement or to print any advance notice of the protest meeting in Tremont Temple last Sunday afternoon, when Dr. Rowley presided, and Dr. Eliot, Dr. Crothers, and Miss Moffat were among the speakers. It is now printing at length the story of the so-called Birth of a Nation, following broadsides of advertising for the show. Only two daily newspapers in this city have had the courage and the independence to de-

nounce "The Birth of a Nation" and demand its suppression.

A newspaper man has told me that one of the leading witnesses in favor of this film who spoke before the judiciary committee at the State House last week told him that he, the witness, received \$500 for talking thirty-five minutes there, and he was not a lawyer either.

Mr. Dixon said in my office that he and his associates guarded against hostile demonstrations at the Liberty Theatre, where this photo play is shown in New York, by having Pinkerton detectives scattered through the audience at every performance. This was before the outbreak, when eggs were thrown upon the screen,—before there was any disturbance. Mr. Dixon said that Pinkerston had been employed to watch every part of the Tremont Theatre here from the first performance.

These are some of the methods employed in forcing a false, immoral, and dangerous propaganda upon Boston. All of our most cherished traditions in Massachusetts and in America are at stake. In other days, inspired by Hancock and the Adamses, by Garrison, Phillips, Andrew and Sumner, Massachusetts led the fight for liberty, justice, and equal rights. In these later days, shall those principles be held less sacred? Shall the words of the great leaders of the past be forgotten? Shall dazzling motion pictures be permitted to profane their memory, falsify history, glorify lynching and other crimes, and incite race hatred against our fellow citizens? It is not like the Massachusetts of the past to permit this Dixon-Griffith propaganda, with its powerful, menacing support, financial and political, to continue within its borders. I urge you all to use every legitimate means to secure the speedy enactment of a law, wise and definite, under which this immoral and wicked play may be stopped, and any similar ones may be kept out of the Old Bay State forever.

The PRESIDENT. As usual, when you plan a meeting for a discussion, the speakers give us so much interesting and valuable information that there is too little time left for it. I do hope, however, that somebody has a proposition to make by which the sentiments of, if recess teachers of history and of English can somehow be got before the public, to show that the protest against this play does not come entirely from the negroes,—hysterical negroes. The question touches us as teachers of English and history far more deeply than this single play is concerned; for nothing that Mr.

Cobleigh or Professor Hart has said is strong enough, when you take into account the insidious inroads that the moving picture allurements are making into the time and interests of the very best of our pupils. You may flatter yourselves that they don't go to the movies much; but the testimony of even some of my best boys is that they do go,—for entertainment; and if in addition to that entertainment, which is negatively insidious, we are now going to get this subsidized propaganda to do actual wrong, isn't it time for us to say something?

Professor PEARSON (Head of the English department, Mass. Inst. Technology.) Mr. Chairman, I move *that it be the sense of this meeting of teachers of history and of English that it put on record its protest against this play and express its hope that wise and definite legislation be enacted under which the production of this and similar photo plays may be prevented.*

The PRESIDENT. Is there any objection to such a proposition? We all of us have a feeling that a law directed against a particular play in the heat of any excitement is apt, perhaps, to overlook something and perhaps do more harm than good; but it does seem that we ought to be recorded as earnestly protesting against the perversion of history that goes under the name of this historical film. Do you offer that as a formal motion, Mr. Pearson?

Professor PEARSON. I put that in the form of a motion.

A LADY MEMBER. I should like to second that motion. I am a Southerner, too.

The PRESIDENT. The motion is moved and is seconded by a Southerner. All those in favor will please say "Aye," opposed, "No."

The PRESIDENT. It is a unanimous vote.

Copies of the resolutions were sent to both the House and the Senate,—also, copies of this stenographic report of the meeting to the new Board of Censors (consisting of the Mayor, the Police Commissioner, and the Chief Justice of the Municipal Court), established by the legislation ("wise and definite"?) of May 21, 1915.

EDITORIAL NOTES

MOTION PICTURES AGAIN

Concerning the merits or demerits of the particular photo-play discussed in this *Leaflet* we offer no editorial comment. We do wish to emphasize, however, a policy that teachers of English and teachers of history should unite in supporting. This policy demands that an author writing plays purporting to be historical should exercise the utmost care to prevent perversions of historical truth and historical spirit. This does not mean that particles of romance should obstinately be excluded; romance may be as freely introduced into a photo-play as into an historical novel. But

these romantic portrayals should never be presented in a way to distort the truth or to augment prejudice. Even too much emphasis upon an incidental truth may wrench the focus and create a misconception.

Those who have seen the film that reproduces the story of *Silas Marner* assert that the producers have entirely failed to portray the spirit of the story. These producers have selected only the more melodramatic scenes of the novel and have given them a prominence that entirely falsifies the work. The selected items are true, but the emphasis is false because the scenes were portrayed without proper accompaniment.

Teachers of history and teachers of English should unite in the work of earnestly discouraging such perversions. They should, however, be just as earnest in assuring themselves beforehand that the film is in reality false—not seemingly false because viewed through a prejudiced lens.

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